

## **Cultist at My Door**

### **An Orthodox Examination of the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses**

**By John W. Morris**

You're sitting at home on a Saturday afternoon, enjoying some peace and quiet, when the doorbell rings. You open it to find two neatly groomed young men in white shirts and black ties, holding black books that look like Bibles; their bicycles are propped against the wall nearby. "Good afternoon," they say. "We're from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and we'd like to share a few things with you from the Book of Mormon—the real truth about Jesus Christ."

But if you take the time to talk to these polite young men in some depth, you may discover (if they explain their faith candidly) that although they claim to bring new truths about Jesus Christ, their beliefs are really more similar to an ancient heresy than to the Gospel taught by Christ and His Apostles.

From her very beginning, the Church has struggled to defend the truth taught by Jesus Christ to His Apostles against false teaching. Two movements, Gnosticism and Arianism, arose during the first centuries of Christian history. Gnosticism, one of the first movements to threaten Orthodox Christianity, taught that Christ had left secret knowledge to be revealed only to the elect. Some Gnostics also believed that humans existed as disembodied souls before their birth on earth.

For almost three centuries, the Church, led by such great theologians as Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, fought to prevent the wave of Gnosticism from washing away the Gospel taught by Jesus Christ. However, once Gnosticism had been cast onto the dustbin of history, another teacher arose to challenge Orthodox Christianity. Arius, a priest in Alexandria, gathered a large following for his teaching that Jesus Christ is not God Incarnate, but a creation of God. Arius also rejected the Orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

After a major struggle that shook the whole Christian world, the Church rejected the new teaching and reaffirmed its commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the conflict with Arianism gave the Church its basic statement of Faith, the Creed adopted by the first two Ecumenical Councils, Nicea I in 325 and Constantinople I in 381, which is recited at every Orthodox Divine Liturgy.<sup>1</sup> The struggle with Arianism also gave the Orthodox Church some of its greatest theologians, Saint Athanasius and the

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<sup>1</sup> I believe in one God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; of His kingdom there shall be no end. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets. In one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church; I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins; I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

Cappadocian Fathers, Saints Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory the Theologian.

Although Orthodoxy eventually triumphed over these and other heresies, men and women have continued to reject the teachings of the Church and to follow their own doctrines. America has produced two major challenges to Orthodox Christianity: the Jehovah's Witnesses, whose teachings resemble ancient Arianism in many ways; and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, whose beliefs and practices are very similar to, although not identical with, ancient Gnosticism.

## THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, was born on February 16, 1852. He grew up in Allegheny and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and became a journalist. In 1875, Russell, who had left the Congregational Church, became the leader of a Bible class in Pittsburgh. Four years later, Russell began publication of *Zion's Watch Tower*, which quickly grew to a circulation of over 60,000.

By 1908, Russell had moved to Brooklyn, still the headquarters of the movement today. Despite his rather unorthodox views, he gained an enthusiastic following. Some flocked to study at his Gilead Bible School. Others worked on three Kingdom Farms that produced food, furniture, and other needs for the society and for Russell's publishing house in Brooklyn, in return for room and board and a meager allowance.

Despite his success as a religious leader, evidence presented in courts when his wife divorced him and in unsuccessful suits he brought against his critics reveals that Russell was nothing more than a clever con-man. Official court records show that among other things, Russell controlled a holding company that channeled the money of the organization into his personal accounts.

The leader of the Jehovah's Witnesses had also been involved in such schemes as selling his followers an inferior grade of wheat he called "Miracle Wheat" at highly inflated prices. Russell had thrilled his followers with published accounts of speeches before enthusiastic groups that never really took place. During one embarrassing testimony, an attorney forced Russell to admit under oath that he had lied when he claimed that he could read Greek, that he had been ordained to the ministry, and that his wife had not divorced him. Thus, court records reveal that Russell was anything but a righteous man who sacrificed his personal wealth and comfort for his religious ideals.

### *Arianism Reincarnated*

Following Russell's sudden death on October 31, 1916, Joseph Franklin Rutherford assumed leadership of the organization until his death in 1942. Because Rutherford had been a special judge of the Eighth Judicial Circuit Court in Booneville, Missouri, his followers called him Judge Rutherford. Rutherford gave the growing movement the name Jehovah's Witnesses, from the incorrect translation of Yahweh or "The Lord God" in the King James Bible.

During many radio addresses, Rutherford expanded on Russell's ideas to create the beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses, while denouncing traditional Christian doctrine as "satanic." Today there are 3.8 million followers of the Jehovah's Witness religion. They publish their magazine, *The Watch Tower*, in a hundred languages and are known for going door to door trying to persuade others to join their movement.

Like the ancient Arians, Jehovah's Witnesses deny the doctrine of the Incarnation and the deity of Christ. They also charge that after Constantine adopted Christianity, the Church yielded to paganism by accepting the Holy Trinity. Instead, they believe that God created Jesus Christ before the beginning of the world in the form of the Archangel Michael, who eventually came to earth as Jesus Christ—a created being who, despite his

moral perfection, was only a man, not the Only Begotten Son of God. They also believe that the Holy Spirit is merely Jehovah's invisible energizing force. Even today, followers of the Jehovah's Witnesses wage a relentless war against the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Holy Trinity through such forums as internet news groups.

Lest their followers stray away from the Arian-like teachings of Russell and Rutherford into more traditional Christian doctrines by reading an accurate translation of the Bible, Rutherford's successors released their own version of the Bible, *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, in 1961. Significantly, although the publishers claim that their translation is the work of qualified scholars, they have not revealed these scholars' names or credentials.

*The New World Translation* makes subtle changes in the text of the Bible to support Jehovah's Witness doctrine. For example, it adds "a" to John 1:1 so that the text reads, "the Word was a god." However, the correct translation of this important verse is, "The Word was God." As correctly translated, the first chapter of Saint John's Gospel shows that the semi-Arian teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses cannot be reconciled with the Holy Scriptures.

Although they deny the divinity of Christ, the Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Christ atoned for sin by his death. Significantly, they believe that Our Lord died on a stake rather than on a cross. They also believe that only 144,000 will be saved. All others will either cease to exist or will rise with a physical body to everlasting life on earth. Jehovah's Witnesses also believe that Christ came again in 1914 and cast the devil and his angels down to earth, where they caused a great deal of trouble. Indeed, 1914 is a good date to cite for trouble, for the First World War began in that year.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that four years later, Christ entered the spiritual temple to cleanse it in preparation for the resurrection of the 144,000 chosen to join him there. At the time of that resurrection, they believe, Christ and his armies will defeat Satan and his followers (including organized religion) at the great battle of Armageddon. Following his victory, Christ will then cast Satan and his followers into the abyss or a deathlike state for a thousand years, during which Christ and the 144,000 saved ones will rule over earth from heaven.

During this time there will be two resurrections. First the righteous of the Old Testament will rise and become princes on earth. Then all those who wanted to do right but died without the opportunity to hear the truth of Jehovah will rise and receive a chance to become faithful members of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Finally, Satan will be released from bondage and begin a campaign of deceit to lead a final rebellion against Jehovah. After Jehovah intervenes and casts Satan and his followers into annihilation in the lake of fire, Christ and the 144,000 will remain in heaven, while those who accepted the truth of the Jehovah's Witness religion will live in an earthly paradise.

The teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses are far removed from Orthodox Christianity. They reject the Incarnation and divinity of Christ, teaching a modern form of the ancient heresy of Arianism, condemned by the Church at the First Ecumenical Council, Nicea I, in 325. Thus they also reject the doctrine of the Trinity, which they consider a false teaching that came into the Church through pagan influence.

Although the Scriptures teach and the Orthodox Church affirms the Second Coming of Christ, there is nothing in the Bible that mentions the coming of Christ in 1914. Indeed, Our Lord said in Mark 13:32 that no one, not even the angels in heaven, knows when He will come again. There is no mention in the Scriptures of Christ coming into a “spiritual temple.” Scriptures teach not that Christ will return in secret, but that He will return with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

The New Testament does not teach two forms of salvation, one for 144,000 (a number used in Revelation 7:1-8 to symbolize the Church as the New Israel), and another, lesser salvation for everyone else. Finally, it is evident that Russell was a less than honest man, who used religion as a means of personal enrichment.

## THE MORMONS

Mormonism grew during a period of great change and social turmoil in America, the early nineteenth century. During this “age of the common man,” men and women left their families to create a new society based on equality, in utopian communes like the Oneida Community of John H. Noyes or Robert D. Owen’s New Harmony. Others campaigned for the transformation of whole areas of American society. Dorothy L. Dix championed the rights of the mentally ill, while Lucretia Mott and her followers campaigned for women’s suffrage.

Meanwhile, the spirit of adventure and reform that was shaking the secular world led prophets of new religions to challenge more traditional forms of Christianity. The religious fervor settled primarily into one area of the country, upstate New York. Here one preacher after another thrilled excited congregations with new revelations of the “true Gospel.”

### *Joseph Smith-Prophet or Profiteer?*

This atmosphere of religious turmoil permitted Joseph Smith, Jr., an obscure man with little formal education, to gain a following for his claim to be a prophet of God with a mission to restore true Christianity.

Born in Sharon, Vermont, on December 23, 1805, Joseph Smith, Jr., moved in 1816 with his father and mother, Joseph Sr. and Lucy Smith, and his eight brothers and sisters to Palmyra, New York, in the heart of this area of religious ferment. There the elder Smith eked out a living as a farmer and peddler while spending his spare time looking for buried treasure or counterfeiting his own money. As he grew to adulthood, Joseph Jr. followed his father’s example, claiming to locate buried riches with the help of a “peepstone.”

Stimulated perhaps by the religious excitement of his new home, Smith began to claim special visions, and shifted his concerns from the search for buried treasure to the proclamation of his new religion. In 1820, he claimed to have received a visitation by God the Father and Jesus Christ instructing him to avoid the rival religions fighting for men’s souls in the area (such as Methodism and Presbyterianism), for they had forsaken the true Gospel. Three years later, an angel named Moroni supposedly appeared to lead him to the location of a set of buried golden plates containing the writings of the ancient inhabitants of North America. Aided by a set of large spectacles, the Urim and Thummim, which allowed him to read the “Reformed Egyptian” of the plates, Smith translated and published their contents as *The Book of Mormon* in 1830.

Smith’s followers consider *The Book of Mormon*, a collection of fifteen books which tell the story of two ancient peoples that immigrated to America from the Middle East long before the birth of Christ, a part of Holy Scripture. The first people, the Jaredites, crossed the Atlantic in eight barges and settled in Central America over two thousand years before Christ. In the New World, they established a great civilization. However, a terrible civil war resulted in the complete destruction of this ancient people. According to the Mormons, the prophet Ether left the record of their history on twenty-four plates which form the Book of Ether in the Mormon Bible.

The second people, the followers of the prophet Lehi, fled Jerusalem in 600 B.C. and settled on the West Coast of South America. However, Laman, one of the sons of the prophet, rebelled against God and became an outcast along with his family. The sons of Laman, whom God punished for their sins by turning their skin dark, are the ancestors of the American Indians. Lehi's other son, Nephi, followed the path of righteousness and led his people to establish a great civilization in Central and North America.

Indeed, the descendants of Nephi were so holy that Jesus Christ Himself descended from heaven in A.D. 34 to preach to them and to establish the church in the New World. However, the wicked descendants of Laman grew stronger and destroyed the descendants of Nephi in a terrible battle in A.D. 385. Moroni, the only survivor of this holocaust, recorded their history and buried it with the plates of Ether in Hill Cumorah, where Joseph Smith claimed to have found them in 1823-24.

No credible archeologist or anthropologist has found the slightest evidence to support the fantastic story of *The Book of Mormon*. Indeed, all authorities agree that the Native Americans are descended from Asiatic peoples who moved into the New World from Siberia through Alaska. The canonical Scriptures give no indication that ancient Jews migrated to the New World, or that Jesus Christ ever visited America. There is no record of the existence of such a language as "Reformed Egyptian," much less of its use in America.

Suspiciously large portions of *The Book of Mormon* appear to be crudely reworded selections from the King James Bible. Indeed, there is very strong evidence that the real source of *The Book of Mormon* is the imagination of Joseph Smith, rather than a mysterious set of gold tablets. Significantly, the Mormons cannot produce the golden plates as evidence of the truth of Smith's claims, for they no longer exist. There is even considerable reason to believe that Smith actually rewrote an unpublished novel by Solomon Spaulding entitled *The Manuscript Found*, using it as the basis for *The Book of Mormon*.

Spaulding, a retired Presbyterian minister, submitted his work to a publisher in Pittsburgh shortly before his death in 1816. Sidney Rigdon, an early associate of Smith, visited the printing house that year and showed a copy of Spaulding's manuscript to several friends. Although the original work has disappeared, several of Spaulding's relatives and friends have testified to the great similarity between *The Manuscript Found* and *The Book of Mormon*.

Regardless of whether *The Book of Mormon* came solely from Smith's vivid imagination or from Spaulding's work of fiction, the Mormon prophet utilized his claim of access to the mysterious golden tablets for personal gain. As a result, he became the leader of a growing religious movement that was much more successful than his fruitless efforts to discover buried treasure. So great was Smith's desire for financial profit from his works that he persuaded one gullible follower, Martin Harris, to mortgage his farm to finance the publication of the original edition of *The Book of Mormon* on March 26, 1830.

Smith also claimed that God spoke directly to him. Along with *The Book of Mormon*, Smith's prophecies and sermons, published in *Doctrine and Covenants*, *The Pearl of Great Price*, and *The Teachings of Joseph Smith*, form the basis for Mormon doctrine. On May 15, 1829, Smith and Oliver Cowdery claimed that Saint John the Baptist

conferred on them the Aaronic Priesthood. A few days later, they asserted that Saints Peter, James, and John came down from heaven to admit them to the higher Melchizedek Priesthood.

Smith gathered five followers and organized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints on April 6, 1830, in Fayette, New York. Stimulated by the publication of *The Book of Mormon*, the small group grew swiftly and moved to Kirkland, Ohio, where they formed themselves into a commune.

From Kirkland, the infant Mormon Church spread to other cities, including Independence, Missouri. Here, Smith ordered the faithful to purchase land on the basis of a vision that Christ would establish his temple there following the Second Coming. Naturally, Smith, who did not hesitate to condemn all other churches as “apostate,” aroused a great deal of opposition.

Finally, Smith and his followers organized a town of their own in Nauvoo, Illinois. However, criticism of the new religion continued to grow, especially following Smith’s “revelation” of July 12, 1843, sanctioning polygamy. In an effort to crush opposition, Smith and his followers destroyed the plant of a newspaper that had published several critical articles. As a result, the “prophet” found himself in jail. However, the bars failed to protect him from the enraged populace, which attacked the prison and killed Smith on June 27, 1844.

### *Go West, Young Man*

Following the “martyrdom” of their leader, the Mormons fell into a struggle between the various claimants to the leadership of the movement. After an unsuccessful attempt by Sidney Rigdon to claim the mantle of the prophet, Brigham Young emerged as the leader of the largest faction of Mormons. Young believed that Mormons could never practice their faith unmolested while surrounded by followers of other religions. Therefore, he led thousands in a grueling trek across the wilderness to Salt Lake City, Utah. Those who rejected Young’s leadership, especially following the introduction of plural marriage, formed two smaller groups, “The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints”, and the “Church of Christ (Temple Lot)” in Independence. Young, who eventually had twenty-five wives, was a brilliant leader. He presided over the transformation of a desert wasteland into a well-planned city, and left an organization of 140,000 at his death in 1877.

Today, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints claims a membership of over two million throughout the world. Still centered in Salt Lake City, the Mormon Church consists of over six thousand parishes, called wards, which are organized into “stakes.” Advised by a council of twelve “apostles,” the president of the church exercises absolute authority and is considered a spokesman for God by the faithful.

In addition to its religious activities, the Mormon Church sponsors a very effective social services program for its members. “Storehouses,” a remnant of the movement’s origins in the age of communes, provide food and clothing for members in need. The body sends out thousands of missionaries, young men who give a year or two to spread their faith. Known for their white shirts, black ties, and bicycles, they go door to door in an effort to bring others into the Mormon fold.

## *The Mormon God*

Based largely on the revelations by Joseph Smith, Mormon doctrine is radically different from traditional Christian doctrine. Like the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons reject the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Ridiculing traditional monotheism, Smith believed that the god of this world is but one of the many gods who populate the heavens.

Smith taught that the god of this world, the Elohim of the Old Testament, is really an exalted man who lived on a planet and had a father like any other man. Elohim is not a spirit, but possesses a human body of flesh and bones. Indeed, materialism is so important to Mormons that they affirm the eternity of matter and deny its creation by Elohim or any other god. The Father of this world, identified as Adam by some Mormon theologians, achieved godhood and sired a race of spiritual children. The Father has not reached perfection, but is in a state of constant growth.

Although Mormonism rejects the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, the followers of this religion believe in the existence of the Son and the Holy Spirit. However, they insist that these are separate from the Father, not "one in essence and undivided" as Orthodoxy teaches. Mormons believe that Christ is not the Only Begotten Son of God, but merely the firstborn of the Father and the elder brother of the human race. Identifying Christ as the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Mormons believe that He organized creation at the command of His Father, Elohim.

Following the fall of man, Christ came to earth to offer Himself as a sacrifice on the Cross to save fallen mankind from eternal death. The Holy Spirit of Mormonism is a separate entity which acts as the agent of Elohim in managing creation. Mormons believe that all humans are actually sons of god, and that their existence began long before physical birth.

According to their doctrine, Elohim gave birth to many spiritual children, some of whom became men and some of whom continue to serve as angels until their physical birth. Before the organization of this world, Elohim met with his spiritual children to plan a place for their dwelling that they might grow into godhood as he had done. As a result, the earth came into being.

However, Lucifer and a third of the sons of god rejected Elohim's plan and were cast out of heaven. Unable to assume physical bodies, necessary for their exaltation to godhood, they became disembodied spirits. Those who obeyed Elohim were allowed to come to earth to assume bodies so that they might grow into godhood. Adam was the first spirit to receive a body and became the father of mankind. However, his wife Eve fell through the temptation of Satan, thereby presenting Adam with a dilemma.

His mission was to have children by Eve to provide bodies for the spiritual children of Elohim. However, through her fall by eating of the forbidden fruit, Eve became mortal and her children would be mortal. Adam, according to Smith, unselfishly chose to become mortal himself by sin so that he might fulfill the Father's command to have children. Therefore, according to Mormon theology, every person born into this world consists of two parts. The first is the spirit, which was born of Elohim before the organization of this world. The second is the corrupt body inherited from Adam and Eve.

Because of the greatness of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, Mormons believe that all mankind will have the opportunity to gain salvation. Following death, every person will await the Last Judgment in an intermediate place called Paradise. There the dead will have a chance to repent of their sins and become Latter Day Saints. The Mormons practice the baptism of the dead by proxy as a means to assist those in Paradise to become members of their church.

Following the Last Judgment, only those who knowingly rejected Christ will spend eternity in perdition with Satan and his angels. The rest of mankind will inherit one of the three degrees of "Glory." Those who did not become Christians and who lived evil lives will spend eternity in the "Telestial Kingdom." There, separated from Christ, they will receive the just rewards for their sins. Those who lived righteous lives and who became Christians following death will inherit the "Terrestrial Kingdom." Spending eternity in the presence of Christ, they will, however, be deprived of fellowship with Elohim and full exaltation to godhood.

Finally, the righteous Christians will be raised to the "Celestial Kingdom." There, in the presence of Elohim, they will share in his glory and will become gods themselves. Those in the Celestial Kingdom will even be able to have spirit children and to become gods of their own worlds, just as Elohim became the god of this world.

In order for a person to enter into the highest level of the Celestial Kingdom, he must fulfill certain obligations. He must be baptized by immersion in the name of "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," and must receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands from an elder in the Mormon Church. Every person aspiring to godhood must also enter into a "celestial marriage" for eternity in a special ceremony in a Mormon Temple.

As gods, men and women in the Celestial Kingdom will be able to give birth to their own spiritual children and organize their own worlds for them just as Elohim became the god of this world, which he populated with his own spiritual sons and daughters.

### *The Priesthood and the Temple*

Mormonism places great emphasis on its priesthood, claiming to be a restoration of the true Church by virtue of its exclusive possession of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Before a person may advance to the higher priesthood, he must first pass through the three ranks of the lower Aaronic Priesthood. Named after the first Jewish High Priest, Aaron, the lesser priesthood of Mormonism consists of deacons, teachers, and priests.

Following advancement through the Aaronic Priesthood, a man is eligible to enter the Melchizedek Priesthood. Named for Melchizedek of Genesis, the higher priesthood of Mormonism consists of five levels: elders, seventies, high priests, patriarchs, and apostles. In each area one high priest has the office of bishop of the ward, a group of stakes. One high priest serves as the chief executive officer of the Mormon Church, the First President, who is believed to possess special prophetic powers and to act as a spokesman for God. Twelve apostles form a council to advise the First President.

The temples are central to the exercise of the Mormon priesthood. Here, in absolute secrecy, the faithful participate in elaborate ceremonies, complete with secret

handshakes and special clothing, to receive the Endowments of the Priesthood and to be married for eternity. They also participate in baptism, ordination, and even marriage services for the departed. Mormons wish to extend the blessings of their faith to their ancestors and spend a great deal of time and effort in extensive genealogical research to learn the names of their ancestors. Then they are united in celestial marriage and prepared for exaltation to godhood in the world to come.

The Mormons have built sixteen temples, twelve in the United States and others in Canada, England, Switzerland, and New Zealand. The most famous temple is in Salt Lake City, the headquarters of the Mormon Church. Only members of the church in good standing may enter a temple, and no part of the ceremony may be disclosed to an outsider. Thus, like the ancient Gnostics, the Mormons teach that only those who are admitted to secret knowledge can achieve the highest level of salvation.

Actually, the rites of Mormon temples bear no resemblance to the worship of the temple of ancient Jerusalem or to the worship of any Christian Church. There is no praise of God or reading from Holy Scripture, or any other act usually associated with worship. Indeed, the services are more like the initiation rites of a fraternal organization than services of worship. Significantly, Joseph Smith, Jr., the author of the temple rites of Mormonism, was himself a thirty-second degree Mason.

### *Recycled Gnosticism*

Although there are important differences between ancient Gnosticism and Mormonism, the similarities are striking. They both replace biblical Christianity with a very elaborate set of legends and esoteric teachings found, for Mormons, in the fanciful tales of The Book of Mormon and the teachings of Joseph Smith.

Like some ancient Gnostics, Mormons believe in the preexistence of souls, a doctrine contrary to Scripture and condemned by the Church at the Fifth Ecumenical Council, Constantinople II in 553. The secrecy of the temple rites of Mormonism is a parallel to the secret knowledge of ancient Gnosticism.

However, Mormonism differs from ancient Gnosticism in one major way. Gnosticism considered the physical world so evil that many Gnostics denied the Incarnation, teaching instead that Christ only seemed to have a physical body (a doctrine called Docetism). The Latter Day Saints, on the other hand, exalt matter over spirit, believing that matter is eternal.

Although the Scriptures teach that God is spirit (John 4:24), the Latter Day Saints believe that God has a body of flesh and bones. Indeed, they believe that the god of this world is an exalted man who became a god. Finally, they believe that by following the beliefs and practices of the Mormon religion, they too may become gods ruling over their own worlds.

## **THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS CHRIST**

When considering the claims of the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, several questions come to mind. Firstly, one might ask why God would have allowed His people to dwell in darkness for almost two thousand years after Christ, until the coming of Smith or Russell to lead them to the truth. One might also ask why any intelligent person would become a part of a religious movement founded by men whose dishonesty is so apparent. Finally, what good reason could there be for believing self-proclaimed prophets whose teachings contradict the clear doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, instead of holding to the truth proclaimed by the Church founded by Christ and led by His Apostles and their successors?

Ask those polite young men these questions next time they come to your door. Whatever response they might offer, you can be sure there is something they will not be able to provide you with, for it has been carefully hidden from them through the crafty deceit of their movement's founders and leaders: the real truth about Jesus Christ.